

# The Comprehensive Guide to Turbo Galakrond Warrior

Hey CompHS - Insurrection here! I'd like to present to you the Galakrond Warrior deck I hit Rank 1 Legend with on the 27th of December. I originally climbed to Legend with Deathrattle Rogue, but after hearing many Galakrond Warrior success stories, I decided to take TrippyToad's list from the CompHS Discord for a spin. In the post-Shaman nerfs meta, I went 68-36 in Legend and finished my climb with the version of the deck posted below, which I played 62 games with in all. I wanted to share what I learned during my climb so you too can move up the ranks.

### Very Invoke

# Class: Warrior

# Format: Standard

# Year of the Dragon

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# 2x (0) Inner Rage

# 2x (1) Eternium Rover

# 2x (1) Town Crier

# 2x (1) Whirlwind

# 2x (2) Armorsmith

# 2x (2) Battle Rage

# 2x (2) Ritual Chopper

# 2x (3) Acolyte of Pain

# 2x (3) Awaken!

# 2x (3) Bloodsworn Mercenary

# 2x (3) Scion of Ruin

# 2x (4) Devoted Maniac

# 1x (4) Kor'kron Elite

# 1x (5) Leeroy Jenkins

# 2x (5) Shield of Galakrond

# 1x (6) Kronx Dragonhoof

# 1x (7) Galakrond, the Unbreakable

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## Overall Playstyle

Draw *Galakrond*. Invoke. Win game.

While this is clearly an oversimplification, there is plenty of truth to the above statement. This deck aims to abuse the power of the Warrior class's *Galakrond* and its corresponding invoke, which grants your hero +3 attack for this turn. So for starters, let's talk about what our hero card actually does. *Galakrond, the Unbreakable* is a 7 mana hero card, that when played, gives you 5 armor, draws one minion and buffs it by +4/+4, and changes your hero power. You can upgrade *Galakrond's* Battlecry by invoking 2 and then 4 times, which draw 2 and 4 buffed minions, respectively. Additionally, when fully invoked, you get a 5/2 weapon along with *Galakrond*, making for an extremely potent 7 mana play.

All of these effects are nice, but the most important is *Galakrond's* hero power, which you get one usage of every time you invoke. While the other strong invoke classes, Shaman and Warlock, put 2 power in play for each invoke, Warrior immediately gets a 3 damage ping. This is extremely powerful and can be used to either establish board control or deal large amounts of face damage to your opponent. The downside of this hero power is you're attacking with your own face, meaning you may take large amounts of face damage yourself. I typically ladder with Rogue, and I see many similarities between this deck and general Tempo Rogue builds. In both decks, you use your life as a resource to gain board control. Since both you and your opponent are likely to get low, some games may come down to a race. However, by including cards such as *Eternium Rover* and *Armorsmith*, *Galakrond* Warrior is able to gain large amounts of armor which allows you to further utilize invoke cards, face tank more minions, and win races. All of these benefits allow you to consistently beat aggressive decks, especially burn based ones like Face Hunter.

*Galakrond* Warrior is a special deck, and it's difficult to really pinpoint what archetype it belongs to. It's part tempo, part burn, part combo, and sometimes even part control. Your overall strategy may be to fight for board and power spike with *Galakrond*, but how you do this is going to vary dramatically based on your opponent's deck and your current hand. Sometimes, you'll want to play very defensively, gaining armor while clearing your opponent's board with your rush minions. Other times, you'll want to push the maximum amount of face damage and quickly close out the game. And lastly, because you run a lot of burst and 2-3 card combo synergies, sometimes you may want to cycle aggressively by using the majority of your mana to draw cards. Understanding the balance between each of these styles is challenging but extremely rewarding. Let me emphasize, though, that

regardless of how you play the deck, **Galakrond Warrior is primarily a tempo deck**. You can rarely run your opponent out of resources. You have combos, but they don't OTK your opponent. You win by taking the board and hitting your opponent in the face. I've watched too many games where inexperienced players get greedy and don't remember to play for board presence at all costs. You're not always going to get value out of your cards.

Sometimes you'll have to play *Bloodsworn Mercenary* as a 3/3, Scion as one 3/2, or *Galakrond* to draw 1 card. It will make you sad. But when your alternative is to do nothing, **sometimes an inefficient play is your best play**. Players who refuse to use their cards when they're green and not yellow risk losing the board for no good reason. With this deck, if you lose the board too early, you lose the game. *Galakrond* is no good if you play it and then immediately proceed to die.

Once you're comfortable with the deck, you'll really appreciate how many options you have on some of the midgame turns. Even if you're only playing one card, you'll need to think about if and how you want to trade. Many of your cards have initiative through rush, charge, or invoke, so this is trickier than it may sound.

# General Gameplan

One remarkable stat from my 100+ game climb is that I did not play a single game that took longer than 13 turns. Galakrond Warrior consistently ends the game around turns 7-11, or dies shortly thereafter. As such, I felt it appropriate to split gameplay into three stages, which I think will feel quite distinct once you get comfortable with the deck.

## Stage 1: Early Board Control (Turns 1-4)

- In this phase, you play high health minions (*Town Crier*, *Eternium Rover*, *Armorsmith*, *Acolyte of Pain*) to contest the board and clear off small minions. To respond to larger threats, you can use the invoke from either *Ritual Chopper* or *Awaken*. On these turns, if you have the option to duplicate any target, even a 1/1, with *Bloodsworn Mercenary*, you should almost certainly do so. Sometimes, if I have efficient ways to spend my mana on turns 4 and 5, I'll even play *Mercenary* as a 3/3. Do your best to not fall too far behind on board in this stage, and clear snowbally threats such as *Phase Stalker* and *Skybarge* at all costs.
- Unless you happen to get a powerful *Inner Rage + Mercenary* copy, you won't be pushing too much damage in this stage. That's okay. Focus on taking good trades and getting value off effects that trigger when your minions take damage. In particular, if you can comfortably get 2 draws with *Acolyte of Pain*, you're setting yourself up well for phase 2.

## Stage 2: Chip Damage (Turns 4-8)

- In this phase, you'll want to spend the majority of your mana playing invoke cards. Since these are high tempo, they should allow you to swing the board back if you were losing it. Between your hero's attacks and minion damage, you should be able to deal 10-20 damage to your opponent, setting them close to lethal range.
- Turn planning is extremely important during stage 2, and you should have an idea of how you want to spend your mana over at least the next two turns. If you are holding *Scion* or a *Town Crier* that's likely to pull *Scion*, try to invoke quickly and get those 3/2s on the board. Usually you want to be saving your invokes (especially *Ritual Chopper* and *Awaken*) for removal, but *Scions* swing the game enough to justify power invoking, even inefficiently. If you have *Galakrond* or *Kronx*, prioritize invoking as well, although don't hesitate to make stronger plays if you feel they are necessary. You don't always have to play *Galakrond* on 7 - often it's better to play him on turns 8 or 9 - but you do have to ensure you're in a decent position when you play the hero card. *Kronx* himself is a very slow card to play, so try your hardest to get him out of your hand if you're using him to find *Galakrond*.

- If you don't yet have *Galakrond* or *Kronx*, you should also be trying to utilize your damage pings (*Inner Rage*, *Whirlwind*, *Awaken*) for card draw with *Acolyte* and *Battle Rage*. *Battle Rage* is a powerful engine, but it is conditional. This means when it's strong and you can draw 3 or more cards with it, you should be inclined to do so.
- Building a board is nice, but if you're sufficiently in control, look for opportunities to push additional damage. This way, even if your opponent clears your board, you've still progressed the game by doing permanent damage to them. It can be worth trading off a rush minion or two if this allows you to go face with your invoke attacks. While most games will end in stage 3, sometimes you'll be able to end the game through sheer pressure. Be on the lookout for draws that can potentially enable a burst finisher of charge minion + ping damage + *Mercenary*, and don't be afraid to smorc a little harder if you have burn in hand or can no longer win through board control.

### Stage 3: Closing Out the Game (Turns 7-11)

- This phase begins immediately after you play *Galakrond*, and it'll be most apparent if you were able to fully invoke *Galakrond*. You may have been low on cards, but now you've refueled with big tempo bombs. At this stage, it's time to end the game. Be the aggressor. Build a threatening board and push as much face damage as possible with your invokes and hero power. It's very rare for me to be hitting anything but face with my *Arcanite Reaper*. It's difficult for your opponent to provide much counteraggression when they have to deal with your overstatted minions. If you do happen to be a bit low, play a bit of defense by using taunts and armor gain mechanics, but still look to deal a solid chunk of damage. In this spot, I find it's often correct to race your opponent. You get a head start, and initially your opponent won't be able to keep up with you. However, remember your tempo advantage is only temporary. Once you run out of buffed minions, you're left with only a slightly better hero power and thus perform more or less like a normal deck.
- If you played *Galakrond* when you were already ahead, be stingier with your buffed minions. Don't commit all of your cards at once. There are currently many highlander decks that can pull off the occasional miracle board clear, but they can generally only do this once. Save some refill, and you should be good to go.
- In some instances, you can win the card advantage war. If you try to do so, make sure to preserve answers to any remaining threats your opponent might put out. *Kronx* or a buffed *Scion* are your best ways to respond to your opponent's development. As you've seen, I'm a big advocate for making the strongest tempo play, but be a little greedier with *Kronx's* devastation. It often winds up being an extremely useful panic button.

- Lastly, **remember to check for lethal!** You often have much more damage than it appears at first glance. Pay special attention to whether your chargers are buffed or not.

## Decklist and Inclusions

Data shows that *Galakrond*, along with all the invoke cards, are some of the best performing cards in the deck. *Galakrond* itself is the highest winrate card in the deck (some sources show *Town Crier* as better, but it's close). Because of this, I chose a cycle heavy version designed to stay alive and draw *Galakrond* often. Although 2x *Whirlwind* and 2x *Battle Rage* can make for awkward hands at times, the two cards synergize quite well together. Also, I felt the additional consistency of 13 two-ofs was worthwhile. Because I only run 17 distinct cards in my deck, I know what to expect when topdecking or digging for an answer.

The core package of Galakrond Warrior has been strong enough to produce several successful decks, and I feel it's still unclear which version is best. In general, I prefer more aggressive lists that run the combo finisher over lists that try to duplicate *Scion*. However, the point of this guide is to educate you on how to play this decklist, so I'll remain focused on that here.

Next, I'll go through my list and briefly describe the general uses of the cards included in my deck.

### Invoke Package

#### Ritual Chopper

This weapon allows you deal 4 damage the turn you play it, and 1 damage sometime later. Because the majority of this weapon's value is from the invoke, I like to compare *Ritual Chopper* to cheap, efficient removal like *Frostbolt* and *Eviscerate*. Don't equip this on turn 2 unless without a minion to hit unless you have an extremely strong follow up, such as a turn 4 *Scion*.

#### Awaken!

While *Awaken!* is arguably the worst invoke card, it finds a place in the deck as the whirlwind effect synergizes well with *Armorsmith*, *Eternium Rover*, *Battle Rage*, *Acolyte of Pain*, and on occasion *Bloodsworn Mercenary*. *Awaken!* helps solidify victories against decks such as Face Hunter and Galakrond Zoo Warlock, and it means opponents can't effectively go wide against us.

#### Devoted Maniac

This is a relatively simple invoke card that will often be used as flexible removal or burn. It notably trades well into the opponent's *Shield of Galakrond*. When playing *Devoted Maniac*,

it is often better to rush into your opponent's and push face with your hero attack, as the 2/2 body is unlikely to stick around for too long. This allows you to push 3 damage and preserve some of your own health.

### *Shield of Galakrond*

This is the only invoke card in the deck with a respectable body as well as our only taunt. It's your go-to turn 5 play that sets up for *Scion*, puts a respectably sized body in play, and clears an opponent's minion or applies face pressure.

### *Scion of Ruin*

You'll frequently want to plan your mulligan and early turns to activate this card as quickly as possible. One of the deck's powerhouses, *Scion of Ruin* provides a huge tempo swing that can save losing games and close out winning ones.

### *Kronx Dragonhoof*

*Kronx* is both a payoff for running *Galakrond* and a tutor that enables you to find him more consistently. Devastations are great, but finding *Galakrond* is of top priority. You'll just about always want to use *Kronx* to draw *Galakrond* if you don't have him, and you'll want to do so as soon as possible. Pre-*Galakrond*, you'll find *Kronx* is one of those cards that tends to get stuck in your hand. Because of this, I'd advise you to play it as soon as you can afford to, sometimes even if you have stronger plays available.

As for devastations, the 5 damage board clear is generally the default choice, but I should stress that 8/8 taunts are really good. I use all four of the options at a reasonable frequency, so get creative and you may find plays you don't spot initially. Learning how to time your devastations is challenging, and I'm still not too comfortable with this. On one hand, *Kronx* is often your strongest tempo play, which you generally want to make as soon as possible. On the other, *Kronx* is your best, sometimes only, answer to your opponent's plays and you want to keep it to respond to whatever shenanigans may ensue. If I have another decent play but plan on playing *Kronx* for tempo, I take a minute to consider whether my opponent can both answer the board I will make and develop themselves. If they cannot, go ahead and play it. Worst case, you'll have a relatively empty board to play on your following turn.

### *Galakrond, the Unbreakable*

It's the boi. We built our deck around *Galakrond*, and as such it's a game-defining card. That being said, in order to get his payoff, we must first invoke, draw, and play *Galakrond*. This is a slow process that will take many turns and lots of mana. Ideally, we want to invoke *Galakrond* 4 or more times to get maximal payoff, but we cannot always afford to do so. While I have won games by playing a level 1 *Galakrond*, you'll rarely want to do this.



However, +8/+8 of stats for and a transformed hero power for 7 mana is worth it, so you should be willing to play a level 2 *Galakrond* quite often. I would estimate I did this in about 30-40% of my games. If I have my fourth invoke in hand, I'll try my best to wait for the full upgrade, as it's significantly more powerful. If you only have the third invoke in hand though, I would advise you to simply play the level 2 *Galakrond*. Sometimes you'll brick with your draws and won't ever find that fourth invoke. Even when you do, you're slowing down your *Galakrond* by anywhere from 2-4 turns, which sets you back significantly. This deck tends to run out of cards around turn 8, so the additional resources from your hero card give you much needed gas.

Pay attention to the 1, 2, and 3 cost minions remaining in your deck before playing *Galakrond*. If you can draw a playable buffed minion the turn you *Galakrond*, you get to develop and don't spend your entire turn doing nothing to influence the board. Pay special attention to your *Scions of Ruin*. If you can find a buffed one of these, you pretty much can't lose. This means if you're close to playing *Galakrond* but don't yet need to play a *Scion*, save your *Town Crier* so you have an additional chance to buff it through *Galakrond's* battlecry. Once you have 10 mana, *Galakrond* can be used as a hail mary to find *Scion* to come back from a miserable position.

## Early Game

### Town Crier

This premium 1 drop is the best non-invoke card in your deck, mainly because well... it functions like an invoke card. You run 4 rush minions in your deck (2 copies of both *Devoted Maniac* and *Scion of Ruin*), so *Town Crier* is guaranteed to pull something that either invokes or benefits from invokes. Regardless of the matchup, you're going to want this card early.

### Eternium Rover

Without any Mech synergies, you want this exclusively for turn 1. For 1 mana, you get a 1/3 body and some armor gain and synergy. Solid, but nothing special.

### Armorsmith

Gaining life is great with this deck because it allows you a little extra time to close out the game. *Armorsmith* can help do just this with its passive effect. It has nice synergy with rush minions, particularly *Scion of Ruin*, and it can generate large stacks of armor when copied or when using whirlwind effects. For just 2 mana, you get a 4 health body your opponents aren't going to want to ignore. The nice thing about a healthy 2-drop such as *Armorsmith* is when it's played early, it'll frequently stick around and irritate your opponents, who may have to make an inefficient or overreactionary play to deal with it.

## Cycle

### Acolyte of Pain

I find *Acolyte* to be quite good in this deck at all stages of the game. There are a relatively high number of 1 attack minions in the current meta, and also not too many ways for decks to cleanly deal 3 damage, so dropping an early *Acolyte* (especially one coined on turn 2) will often draw you two cards. And later, you can proc your own *Acolyte* with *Inner Rage*, *Whirlwind*, or *Awaken!* *Acolyte of Pain* is your small draw effect, and a lot of times you can just drop it in play, knowing at worst it will cycle itself.

### Battle Rage

*Battle Rage*, on the other hand, is your large draw effect. I've used this to draw 1 card, and I've used it to draw 8 cards. How greedy you need to be with this will vary from game to game, but essentially if you don't have *Galakrond*, you should be going for max value with *Battle Rage*. If you find a turn where you're floating 2 mana in the early game, though, don't be afraid to cycle this to draw 1. Using this for draw early will help smooth out your midgame invoke curve, which is also necessary for a powerful *Galakrond*. Remember that your hero counts as a damaged character, and take care to damage yourself before gaining armor when this is relevant.

Remember that the power level of *Battle Rage* varies dramatically from turn to turn, so try your best to use it when it's good. This deck really values additional cards because it runs many internal synergies, or as I like to call them, mini-combos. Having more cards allows you better access to these powerful synergies and brings you closer to ending the game.

## Flex

### Inner Rage

Using *Inner Rage* properly is one of the most challenging aspects of this deck. This is because, like most 0 mana cards, it can be used at just about any time. Furthermore, *Inner Rage* can be used in so many different ways. The card's raw power level isn't all that high, but its extreme flexibility makes it a worthwhile inclusion in my opinion. I was having a discussion on the CompHS Reddit forum, and I heard one individual argue against the inclusion of this card because it too frequently got stuck in his hand. This should not be the case. If you cannot find spots where you are reasonably happy to play *Inner Rage*, you're either too greedy or not creative enough.

*Inner Rage* can deal that last point of damage to an enemy minion, or effectively deal 2 damage if you place it on your own minion for trading. It can cycle itself with *Acolyte* or *Battle Rage*. Most powerfully of all, you can combo this with *Bloodsworn Mercenary* to create lots of tempo for only 3 mana. In matchups where you need to be the aggressor, it can even be okay to *Inner Rage* your *Eternium Rover* or *Armorsmith* and start pushing relevant damage.

### *Whirlwind*

A pretty straightforward card, *Whirlwind* can be used to clean up messy boards or proc your minions' on-damage effects. It combos quite well with *Battle Rage*. I experimented with higher value AoEs such as *Warpath*, but found the 1 mana discount to be crucial in a deck that needs to spend most of its mana invoking *Galakrond*.

### *Bloodsworn Mercenary*

*Bloodsworn Mercenary* doesn't get to shine in *Galakrond* decks nearly as much as it did in enrage-based tempo decks, but it's a strong standalone card with massive combo and highroll potential. Because it's a 3/3 for 3 mana, if you can manage to copy anything at all with its battlecry, you're already getting more stats than you paid for. You run plenty of great targets to copy, including *Acolyte of Pain*, *Kor'kron Elite*, *Leeroy Jenkins*, and *Shield of Galakrond*. However, don't wait around to copy just those. You need to be playing for tempo, and other than an active *Scion of Ruin*, *Bloodsworn Mercenary* functions as your most overstatted minion. Get this off on turn 3, and you should be able to control the board during the midgame with invokes. And remember, if you have no other turn 3 play, this is a vanilla 3/3, and it needs to go on the board.

### *Kor'kron Elite*

I only included one copy of *Kor'kron Elite* in my deck, but I think it's reasonable to run two. This card fits nicely into your burn-based gameplan, but it can be used for both face damage and removal. Other than *Ritual Chopper* and to some extent *Awaken!*, it's your only source of 4 damage in the deck. *Kor'kron Elite* is one of the only charge minions with a decent body, and because of this you're never unhappy when you play it.

### *Leeroy Jenkins*

And finally, we have Hearthstone's classic finisher - *Leeroy Jenkins* himself. If you're losing the board and feel like you won't be able to recover it, don't be afraid to go face. Sometimes, you'll find *Leeroy* or other direct damage and be able to steal games you had no business winning. For reference, check out this game where I was able to win the race against a turn 6 20/20 Edwin (<https://hsreplay.net/replay/66m8Yqzrskbrrc8EBtbe2D>). If you have a source of ping damage, you can copy *Leeroy Jenkins* with *Bloodsworn Mercenary* and kill the

opponent from near full health. Also, situations will arise where you can tempo out a *Leeroy* and clear the Whelps with whirlwind effects or your 1 attack minions. In this manner, you threaten to push 6 damage again the following turn.

I felt the need to address the *Bloodsworn Mercenary* combo finisher because I've heard too many people mistakenly refer to Galakrond Warrior as a combo deck. **This deck will win some games with the *Leeroy* combo, but the deck's core focus is to invoke and play *Galakrond*.** You have plenty of sources of damage, and I'd estimate I only use the *Leeroy/Kor'kron* + *Inner Rage* + *Bloodsworn Mercenary* combo in about 10% of games. In addition, you only really pull off the combo post-*Galakrond*, with the help of the buffed minions you draw from the battlecry.

The only combo piece I regularly hold is *Leeroy*, and I really don't start thinking about the combo unless I have two of the three necessary components. The one scenario when I'm hesitant to use my cards is with *Inner Rage* shortly before I play *Galakrond*. If there are chargers and *Mercenaries* still in my deck, holding onto the *Inner Rage* could allow me to potentially deal ridiculous amounts of burst damage.

The key message I want to send here is **do not tunnel vision on the combo**. If *Inner Rage* or *Bloodsworn Mercenary* is a good play, do it. It's often even correct to use the second copy of these cards and give up on the combo altogether. **Unconditionally holding onto cards because they're "combo pieces" will lose you games you could've won in a more conventional manner - through tempo.**

## Mulligans

In general, you should be trying to find a few early plays and your powerhouses in the Galakrond Warrior mulligan. The main four cards you'll be looking for are *Town Crier*, *Eternium Rover*, *Shield of Galakrond*, and *Galakrond*. You'll notice your games run much more smoothly when you start with a 1-drop in hand, and because of this, I recommend mulliganing aggressively for them. If you happen to have two 1-drops, it's okay to toss one back in slower matchups. If you choose to do this, always keep *Town Crier* over *Eternium Rover*.

And yes, I advocate for keeping a 7 mana card against everything except the most aggressive deck, Face Hunter. This may be uncomfortable at first, but give it a few tries and you'll see just how good *Galakrond* really is. Even though it's somewhat expensive, I choose to keep *Shield of Galakrond* because it's our strongest invoke card either on the coin or with a 1-drop. As a nicely-sized body with taunt, it's good both offensively and defensively.

Against aggro, you'll also want to look for early game tempo cards such as *Armorsmith*, *Ritual Chopper*, and *Awaken!* It's okay to keep *Ritual Chopper* in any matchup where you feel like you may need to remove an early game threat, but in my opinion most players keep this card way too often. I probably keep it around 40% of the time rather than the 93% given from HSReplay.

Against control, it's nice to have *Acolyte of Pain* as a way to cycle in the early game because it's unlikely your opponent will present much of a challenge for the board. In slow matchups, it can be worth keeping *Kronx*, but obviously only do this if you don't have *Galakrond*.

This may be a bit counterintuitive, but I generally don't advocate for keeping *Scion of Ruin* or *Devoted Maniac* unless I have *Town Crier*. *Devoted Maniac* is relatively lackluster in the early game, and *Scion* requires invoke investment before it becomes strong; however with *Town Crier*, you're much more likely to activate *Scion* in the early game. If you keep *Crier* and *Scion*, *Crier* has a 2/3 chance to pull *Maniac*, which is one of the two invokes necessary for *Scion*. If you keep *Crier* and *Maniac*, you have a 2/3 to pull a *Scion* and get the same effect. Without *Town Crier*, I don't keep *Scion* unless I see a way to activate it on turn 4 from hand.

Remember to be flexible with your mulligans, and be willing to experiment! One game, I found a creative keep going first against a Mage, holding onto *Armorsmith*, *Inner Rage*, and *Bloodsworn Mercenary*. I proceeded to make 3 3/3s on turn 3 and finished off my opponent by turn 6! Although these tips are fairly general, they should provide a good baseline for

how to think about the mulligan as Galakrond Warrior. If you're interested in more complete mulligan advice, please see my mulligan chart and the matchup section below.

## Matchups

### Rogue (25-11)

Estimated class spread: 55% Highlander Galakrond, 25% Warbringer Deathrattle, 15% Whelp Deathrattle, 5% Tempo/Face

At high legend, most of my Rogue opponents were playing Highlander Galakrond Rogue, but there was also a decent chunk of Deathrattle Rogue. Of the Deathrattle Rogues, I observed a pretty even split between the *Anubisath Warbringer* and *Mechanical Whelp* builds. Fortunately for us, all of these decks use similar early game cards, so our mulligan works well enough, regardless of what the opponent is playing.

Between *Necrium Apothecary*, *Heistbaron Togwaggle*, *Edwin*, *Galakrond*, and in highlander decks, *Zephyrs* and *Dragonqueen Alexstrasza*, **Rogues have a million different ways to highroll you**. Your job is to kill them before they get too many opportunities to do so. As such, you're the beatdown in this matchup. Sometimes, you'll not have enough early game aggression and be forced to play for board late into the matchup. While this isn't optimal, it's an okay backup plan; you'll occasionally win games when the Rogue draws several low value cards and isn't able to swing the board back.

I used to keep *Acolyte of Pain* against Rogue because they have few ways to cleanly deal 3 damage and play 1/1s, 1/2s, and 1/4s in the early game. I no longer think this is a good idea with the prevalence of *Seal Fate* and *Necrium Blade*, which are both clean on-curve answers to the *Acolyte*. I do like keeping *Ritual Chopper* to deal with *Underbelly Fence*, *Blink Fox*, *Hench-Clan Burglar*, *Evil Miscreant*, and the occasional 4/4 *Edwin*, but I'll only do this going second because you'll rarely play this turn 2 on the play, and therefore you can also draw into *Awaken!* for similar removal. I find *Armorsmith* to also be an okay keep with a 1-drop as it sets up a nice curve and Rogue can't easily remove it.

Rogues have great single target removal, but their AoE is lacking, which means *Scion of Ruin* gets to really shine. If you manage to get a *Scion* out on turn 4, that's even better, because it can't immediately be answered by *Flik Skyshiv*. Even *Zephyrs* won't cut it because the cheapest 2 damage board clear in the classic set costs 2 mana. However, you need to be willing to drop this on an empty board even on later turns. While *Flik* is a great answer to *Scion*, it's a 1-of and Rogue's only answer. When they don't have it, you'll connect for large amounts of damage and force the Rogue to play defensively for the remainder of the game.

You should be trying your best to squeeze as much face damage in as possible, as Rogue has few taunts and it's only reliable healing is *Zilliax* and the 5 armor from *Galakrond*. *Faceless Corruptor* is a powerful swing card for the Rogue, though, so take care to clear the board going into turn 5 if possible. Pay special attention to removing lackeys coming into turn 6, as a *Heistbaron Togwaggle* on curve can be particularly devastating. Usually, unless you'll have lethal if the opponent plays *Togwaggle*, I'd advocate for removing all lackeys. I would continue doing so on turns 7 and 8 unless the opponent has a lackey in hand. Also, due to

the threat of *Zilliax*, it can be worth removing the 7/7 Mechs that come out of *Mechanical Whelp*. Sometimes the game will be close and making these safety plays will allow the opponent too much time to come back. When this is the case, don't be afraid to push the extra damage and play into these punishes.

If the opponent manages to take over the board beyond recovery, it's often time to start launching everything face. You'll want to do a similar thing if your opponent gets off an early *Necrium Apothecary*, especially if the Rogue is playing the *Anubisath Warbringer* version. In this case, you can still develop on the board, but instead, try to go wide with low attack minions so your opponent can't pop the *Apothecary* deathrattle. You will have to allow the deathrattle to pop at some point - you care about the board after all. The turn before this happens, you're sometimes better off killing the *Apothecary* yourself to play around *Necrium Blade* or *Necrium Vial* triggers. Plus, this way your opponent isn't buffing the card they would topdeck.

Frequently, the game will come down to whether the Rogue can pull off a sufficient highroll when they're on the ropes. Fret not, because this is much more likely to go your way than theirs.

### Shaman (3-7)

Estimated class spread: 95% Galakrond, 5% Aggro

Outside of Quest Resurrect Priest, Galakrond Shaman is probably our worst matchup. Although their early game is quite lackluster, they can usually avoid taking too much damage and have *Hex*, *Earth Shock*, and invokes to remove our threats from the board. Most Shaman decks only run healing through *Zilliax* and *Galakrond* (plus *Kronx* after *Galakrond*), but there has been some experimentation with *Lifedrinker* and *Witch's Brew*. Although these last two aren't particularly useful against us, they are worth noting when considering how hard you want to push face. Outside of *Galakrond*, we're most worried about active *Dragon's Pack*, which is extremely painful to deal with. A well-timed *Invocation of Frost* on our face can also make our invokes inefficient and awkward to play.

This matchup is generally a battle of the *Galakronds*, which is unfortunate because Shaman's is usually stronger than ours. *Corrupt Elementalist*, a double invoke, along with *Electra Stormsurge*, allow the Shaman to more consistently invoke *Galakrond* four times. In this matchup, you really need a fully invoked *Galakrond* on turn 7-9 to stand a chance. You're usually able to deal with Shaman's 8/8s at least once, so you can try playing the value game, but this way you run the risk of losing to *Shudderwock*, which you simply have no way to deal with (8/8s are out of range of *Kronx*). The threat of *Shudderwock* is why I



recommend pushing as hard as possible in the midgame and immediately post-*Galakrond*. If you have minions stick on the board, try your best to connect face with them.

In most matchups where we're the beatdown and need to apply pressure, an early *Scion of Ruin* is one of our best plays. *Scion* is still good because it's one of our best ways to go wide and Shaman lists currently run little AoE. However, you should be less inclined to rush out a *Scion* in this matchup because it gets farmed by 2/1s and is often useful in getting through taunts later; *Scion* is our best way to recover from *Dragon's Pack*.

You'll notice that most of my strategy against Shaman revolves around the 2/1, which makes sense because over a quarter of your opponent's cards make 2/1s. If you have the choice between trading a 1/2 and a 1/3 into the opposing Shaman's 1/1, trade the 1/2, because **Shamans deal damage in even numbers**. For this same reason, I like keeping *Acolyte of Pain* and *Shield of Galakrond* with almost all hands. If I have an early game card, I will also keep *Kronx* because *Galakrond* is so essential to this matchup. It's important to have a way to deal with a *Mana Tide Totem* or *Spirit of the Frog*, so I keep *Ritual Chopper* going first. Going second, we run too many answers to justify keeping the weapon. *Awaken!* also deals nicely with 2/1s, but I think keeping it is a trap, since usually Shaman trades these off immediately after summoning them. If the Shaman is able to build a board of 2/1s, you have other issues at hand.

Remember to position around *Zentimo* by keeping your important minions on the far ends of your board and not having silenceable or 1 health minions near each other. Finally, do note that after the nerfs, Galakrond Shaman is still quite unrefined. There are several builds and plenty of tech slots in the deck, so you won't always have a great feel for what you should be playing around. This is okay. **When in doubt, tempo it out!**

### Hunter (6-1)

Estimated matchup spread: 60% Face, 35% Highlander, 5% Quest

Disclaimer: At the time of my climb, Face Hunter was much more popular than Highlander Hunter, which is why I don't cover the Highlander matchup in detail.

Galakrond popularized as one of the best counters to Face Hunter, so it's no surprise that we are favored here. HSReplay lists the matchup winrate as 68% for Warrior, but I feel that in the right hands, you can win over 80% of games against Face Hunter and should lose only when you absolutely brick.

We mulligan for aggro because early game cards are still decent against slow decks, while expensive cards do nothing against fast decks. Regardless of how favored we are against an aggro deck, it's unwise to get greedy just for a slightly better matchup against control. Our mulligan is quite simple. Keep *Town Crier*, *Eternium Rover*, *Ritual Chopper*, and *Armorsmith*. If you have sufficient early game, it's fine to keep *Shield of Galakrond* as well, because the taunt shuts down any hope of Face Hunter pushing damage through their board. *Ritual Chopper* is our answer to the Hunter's *Phase Stalker* and *Animal Companion*, the two biggest threats in their deck.

This is one matchup where you don't have to worry about getting *Galakrond* off, or even getting value out of your cards. You just have to survive, and then once you lock down the board, quickly kill your opponent. There's a very common misconception that against face decks, your job as the control is to make the most defensive play possible. This assumption can lead to errors such as armoring up on turn 2 instead of playing out your strongest minion. The issue with playing slow is that you're giving them additional turns to draw cards, which is a problem when nearly their entire deck is composed of burn damage. Rather, **against Face Hunter, you should be establishing a counter-clock because their defense is quite frankly pathetic.** Life matters, but if you have enough health and armor to be comfortably out of lethal range, pressure your opponent and force them to deal with your board instead of setting up lethal themselves. If you do get low, your best play may be an aggressive one, not a defensive one. By setting up lethal yourself, you can win games when your opponent doesn't have enough damage to kill you the following turn.

In the early game, do everything you can to secure the board. This shouldn't be too difficult because Face Hunter chooses a lot of tempo-inefficient options such as *Leper Gnome* and *Lifedrinker* to deal additional burn damage. Their best source of board control is *Dwarven Sharpshooter*. If your opponent plays this turn 1, you still need to play your 1 drop. It's okay if it gets hero powered down, because this gives you more chances to clear the 1/3 before it snowballs the board further. *Armorsmith* puts in so much work against Hunter, a class that has no single card that'll deal 4 damage. They'll have to waste a lot of resources clearing the 1/4 and will almost always give you 2 or more armor.

After the board is yours, don't give your opponent too many free outs. Make trades to play around *Unleash the Hounds* combos, which can be especially potent with some lists running *Timber Wolf*. Face Hunter usually runs 2 copies of three different secrets: *Explosive Trap*, *Freezing Trap*, and *Misdirection*. Play around these as best you can and avoid giving your opponent additional charges on *Eaglehorn Bow*; the weapon can provide sustained damage that is difficult to handle. If for some reason you do need to attack with a high attack minion, it may be worth first playing smaller minions to minimize the chance of

*Misdirection* targeting your face. It's crucial to not trigger *Explosive Trap* until some of your board will survive and you're ready to deal a substantial amount of damage to your opponent. **You don't have to attack with your minions every turn.** Face Hunter can do little to take back the board once they've lost it. In the few turns you stall while setting up a good time to trigger the trap, the Hunter can do little except throw their cards face. Because their deck is so cheap, they'll usually have the mana to do this regardless.

### Warlock (5-2)

Matchup spread: 60% Galakrond Zoo, 40% Dragon Handlock

Warlock's two decks play very differently. Galakrond Zoo plays lots of early game minions, makes 1/1 demons with their invoke, and cheats out cheap *Sea Giants*. Handlock spends most of the early game drawing cards and clearing the board. After this, the deck plays big threats such *Mountain Giants* and *Twilight Drakes* and protects their life total with taunts using *Abyssal Summoner* and *Sunfury Protector*. Handlock also runs some powerful lategame finishers like *Alexstrasza* and *Malygos + Soulfire*.

We again commit to mulliganing for aggro, because early game is vital to both matchups. Against Zoo, our goal should be to control the board and to take value trades whenever possible. Between invokes, lackeys, and *Scarab Egg* tokens, you'll be seeing 1 health minions throughout the game. This is why if you know you're facing Zoo, it can be okay to keep *Whirlwind*. When you can keep the opponent's board completely clear, you should do so unless trading costs you a lot of damage. Without easy targets for *Faceless Corruptor* or *Evil Genius*, your opponent's gameplan will slow down. It can even be worth popping a *Scarab Egg* if you can clear off some of the tokens, because this denies *Knife Juggler* value. The two cards you're most worried about are *Grim Rally*, which can buff boards out of range of whirlwind effects, and *Sea Giant*, which is large. I don't recommend intentionally sacking minions to make *Sea Giant* more expensive, because the sacrifice in your own tempo is too great. Your best way to deny these cards their value is by relentlessly clearing the board and even taking one-for-one trades to prevent minions from being buffed.

Usually you'll be left with a bunch of low health minions after value trading. From here the opponent will have just *Knife Juggler*, spell lackey, and *Galakrond* as comeback mechanisms. These are all reliant on RNG, and thus I wouldn't recommend playing too hard around them. For reference, your average demon is approximately a 4/4 and around 25% have taunt. **I play the Zoolock matchup as almost entirely a board battle** and don't start ignoring minions to go face until they will get very low (usually under 10 HP). At this point, it becomes risky for the Warlock to tap so they may have to forego hero powering.

Against Zoo, you'll want to be greedy with your *Awaken!* and *Whirlwinds*. There will be multiple waves of 1/1s, so you want to be clearing at least 3 when you use these. Ideally, you line up whirlwind effects (even an *Inner Rage* if you have to) with your opponent's *Dragonblight Cultist*, because you really don't want to be facetanking a minion with such high attack and low health. Note that a turn 1 *Flame Imp* is a big threat to our deck because it farms our early game minions and can potentially deal lots of damage if it sticks on the board. Do your best to remove it as quickly as possible.

Handlock is a tough matchup that will feel quite unsatisfying because the result of the game largely depends on how badly our opponent draws. Your best bet is to play as aggressively as possible and beat them up before too many big taunts come down. *Galakrond* is nice, but if we draw the game out for too long, we may have to sink 20+ damage into taunts. This really slows us down for two reasons. First, our only good removals from hand are *Scion of Ruin* and *Kronx*. If we don't have these we'll often need to use charge minions or invoke damage to get through taunts. Secondly, taunts allow the opponent to go face aggressively and credibly threaten lethals (Handlock runs *Nether Breath*, *Soulfire*, *Leeroy*, *Crazed Netherwing*, and *Alexstrasza*).

In the early game, establish the biggest board possible and try to put lots of attack power in play. This means it's good to use *Inner Rage* on your *Eternium Rover* and *Armorsmith*. Warlock's single target removal consists of *Mortal Coil*, *Scalerider*, *Nether Breath*, and *Soulfire*. It's tough to play around the last 3 of these options, but do your best to keep your minions above 1 health. If your opponent uses the other removal options to clear your early game pressure, this isn't all that bad for you. When the Warlock spends mana on removal, they aren't tapping and their overall gameplan slows down. **Make the Handlock play their cards instead of tapping, because they can do very little with a small hand.** If you force the Handlock to play defense, they'll worry about our board rather than playing 8/8s and 4/9s. From here, you can sometimes burst them down with chargers or get off an invoked *Galakrond* and overwhelm them immediately thereafter. You should be doing almost zero trading with your minions. Your opponent will essentially be playing one large minion per turn, so they will often be unable to full clear your board with minions alone. Don't make it easy for them by killing your own board off!

Going into your opponent's turn 5, do your best to build a board with at least one minion that survives *Crazed Netherwing*. Warlocks are pretty squishy, so it's important to connect face as many times as possible. Their healing is *Nether Breath*, *Zilliax*, and occasionally *Khartut Defender*. Don't worry too much about *Khartut*, because we can't really beat it anyway. The 3/4 + 3/1 statline is very awkward to deal with when our invokes deal 3 damage. I will typically use *Scion of Ruin* as a removal if the Warlock taunts anything up,

because this allows us to push face damage with our current board, and face damage matters a ton against Warlock. Keep in mind that it's also a nice refill if your board does get cleared. Don't be afraid to go wide and leave your *Scions* up rather than rushing them in, as this version of Handlock plays relatively little removal - only *Dark Skies* and *Crazed Netherwing*.

### Warrior (14-11)

Matchup spread: 70% Mirror, 30% Pirate

The Pirate Warrior matchup and the mirror play out somewhat differently but they are both approximately the same in terms of speed. Against Pirate Warrior, we'll want to look mainly for invoke cards because they have several 2 and 3 health minions of reasonable size, including *Bloodsail Raider*, *Dread Corsair*, *Hoard Pillager*, *Kor'kron Elite*, and *Restless Mummy*. These invoke cards are also good in the Galakrond Warrior mirror, where early *Galakronds* often do substantial work. In general my mulligan is pretty straightforward here, and I look for 1-drops, *Shield of Galakrond*, *Galakrond*, and on the coin, *Acolyte of Pain* and *Ritual Chopper*. If you coin out an *Acolyte*, Warrior's only responds that will deny you two draws is *Ritual Chopper*, since *Awaken!* whirlwinds the board. *Ritual Chopper* is strong removal, but I don't recommend keeping it on the play because there will almost never be a target you want to hit on curve. *Ritual Chopper* is very efficient removal, but this doesn't matter if you're forced to play it on turn 3 or 4 and float mana.

Pirate Warrior is a bit of a peculiar matchup. If the opponent doesn't draw *Ancharr*, it's relatively easy to play the card advantage game and run the Pirate Warrior out of resources. On the other hand, if they do get out an early *Ancharr*, they may even outvalue you. *Ancharr* has a drawn winrate over 11% above any other card in the deck, and most Pirate Warriors have even decided to build greedily around it, running 2x *Hoard Pillager*. You're almost always the control in this matchup, but you won't know whether you need *Galakrond* as a finisher until relatively late in the game. You'll almost always have enough tempo to deal with Pirate Warrior's plays, but the tricky part is not taking too much damage in the process. We run only one taunt card, our life gain is somewhat conditional, and we have no weapon destruction. If the opponent manages to equip and upgrade and *Arcanite Reaper* when we're low, there's little we can do to stop it. Our hero power and other armor gain is nice against flat burst, but it has nothing on 5+ damage a turn. This reach means we can't afford to simply facetank all of the Pirate Warrior's minions with our invoke attacks. **It's not hard to win the board against Pirate Warrior, but it's difficult to do so without dying.** We need to establish board control early enough so that our chunkier midgame minions can trade multiple times and limit the damage we take.

The Pirate Warrior's most threatening card is *Skybarge*, which can both secure the board and deal dangerous amounts of face damage. We can't kill this with any invoke, so if we are to answer it in the early game, our best way to do so is with a 1 attack minion + *Ritual Chopper* or *Awaken!* We also need to consider the board swings Pirate Warrior can generate with their two most commonly played rush minions, *Restless Mummy* and *Faceless Corruptor*. *Mummy*, in particular, trades very well into our 1 attack minions, so try to keep some whirlwind effects around to deal with the 3/1 that is likely to be left behind.

Our best way to close out the game when we adopt the card advantage plan but not *Galakrond* is by going wide on the board, and then taunting or armoring out of lethal range. With the help of *Scion of Ruin* and *Bloodsworn Mercenary*, we can create unrecoverable tempo that will allow us more trading options and life gain with *Armorsmith*.

You may be surprised to hear that life total is even more crucial in the Galakrond Warrior mirror than it is in the Pirate Warrior matchup. This is the case both of you run a lot of burn and will be hitting plenty of things with your face. **When both players have lots of cards with initiative, minions will rarely stick around on the board and the majority of the pressure will happen through direct face damage.**

The mirror is a race, and in races, the game flow is determined by relative life total, not raw life total. Life swing is very important in the mirror and is why you should consider trading off your rush minions so your invokes can go face. For example, by playing a *Devoted Maniac* and rushing into your opponent's 3/2, you take 0 damage and are able to send 3 damage face - a net gain of 3 life. Instead, if you choose to use your invoke to hit your opponent's minion, you take 3 damage and deal 0 for a net loss of 3 life. In this example, a life swing of 6 is required to establish a 3/2 minion, which almost certainly isn't worth it except in early stages of the game. We are playing the more aggressive version of Galakrond Warrior so we stand a better chance in the mirror. Take a moment to chuckle while you kill other Warriors who are busy trying to copy their *Scion of Ruin*.

A lot of the mirror is about being the first to draw and play *Galakrond*, but I wanted to discuss other topics first to clarify that it's not exactly that simple. There have been games in the mirror where I've played a fully invoked *Galakrond* on turn 7 and still lost. *Galakrond* itself isn't an "I win" button. It's very strong, but it provides a delayed tempo advantage, not an immediate one. You'll reap the benefits from *Galakrond* on the following turns, and on average should finish off your opponent 2-3 turns after you play it. **The first person to play *Galakrond* (even if only invoked to stage 2) is at a significant advantage because they essentially force their opponent's hand.** The other player must either respond by aggressively closing out the game before the tempo swing happens or by playing *Galakrond*

themselves. If they choose to *Galakrond*, they're simply reacting to your plays and will often take a lot of damage in the process. Our version of the deck really likes to be setting the pace because we can deal large amounts of damage post-*Galakrond* with chargers. It's usually nice to juice *Galakrond* when you can afford to do so, but in the mirror, getting *Galakrond* out on 2 invokes is usually correct if you're losing the invoke or card advantage war. This way, you give yourself a chance to win if your opponent doesn't have *Galakrond*; even if they do, they're in a tough spot and must decide between spending more mana to play invokes or staying at stage 2 themselves.

Intriguingly, a lot of cards in our deck happen to answer each other. *Devoted Maniac* and its corresponding invoke trade up into *Shield of Galakrond*. *Scion of Ruin* makes 3/2 bodies that trade great into *Kronx Dragonhoof* and our 1 attack minions. Having the optimal responses to your opponent's plays will allow you to accumulate tempo while not taking too much damage. Additionally, because accelerating toward *Galakrond* is very strong, drawing cards is quite helpful in this matchup. You'll notice card advantage matters substantially more than you would expect for a fast mirror. The board state may be a little messy at times with both sides periodically using whirlwind effects, value trading, and bumping minions to gain armor, so it's not uncommon to get many draws off *Battle Rage*.

(The Rest)

Druid (1-0)

Mage (9-4)

Paladin (3-0)

Priest (2-0)

Combined, these four classes make up less than 20% of the legend meta. I don't have enough experience in any of these matchups to feel comfortable writing a detailed guide, so I chose not to. I will say none of these matchups seem particularly intricate, with the exception of *Holy Wrath* Paladin, which you can possibly take to fatigue provided you have an answer to *Shirvallah* + *Sathrovarr*. Mage, Paladin, Priest, and non-Token Druid are all fairly slow decks, so you'll need to be the beatdown because you don't win the long game. As I detailed in the general gameplan section, your main goals should be to grab the board, invoke and push damage, and finally end with a powerful *Galakrond*. Pay attention to how your minions line up with your opponent's removal, and try to make your opponent's powerful plays awkward or risky when you can afford to.